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MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

January 23, 2006

TO: District MEAP Coordinators and Title III Coordinators

FROM: Marilyn Roberts, Director
Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability

SUBJECT: Spring 2006 English Language Proficiency Assessment
Administration Information

This spring, the State of Michigan plans to conduct the first annual administration of the statewide English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). The ELPA will be administered to all English language learners in grades K-12. The term, English language learner, or ELL, has been adopted by the State of Michigan to refer to students who are Limited English Proficient.

The administration dates that have been set for ELPA are April 3-28, 2006. Assessment materials will be delivered to districts and schools March 13-15 in order to allow an early start for buildings that have a spring intermission scheduled during the month of April. Schools and districts will receive their first sets of reports about 1 month after return of materials to be scored. A listing of Key Dates for ELPA is included with this e-mail. These dates are also available on the OEAA website, at www.michigan.gov/oeaa.

Meeting Federal Requirements

Statewide administration of ELPA meets federal assessment requirements for English language learners (ELLs). As specified in the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001, Title I requires the annual assessment of all ELLs enrolled in grades K through 12 to determine progress in acquisition of the English language. Areas to be tested and reported include English speaking, listening, reading, writing and comprehension. Proficiency levels are to include a basic, intermediate and proficient level for each grade level assessed. Assessments are to be based on English language proficiency standards, which are to be adopted by each state.

The results for ELPA will be used annually for the Title III federal reporting of ELL student progress in acquiring English language skills. When implemented this spring, local schools and districts will no longer need to convert the results from a variety of locally selected English language proficiency assessments to state-determined proficiency levels for federal reporting purposes.

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • (517) 373-3324

Description of ELPA

Michigan's ELPA is a customized assessment. It is designed to be aligned with the Michigan English language proficiency standards, which were approved by the State Board of Education in April 2004. ELPA will assess both academic and social language. It is divided into four grade-level spans: K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12, which correspond to the grade spans in Michigan's English Language Proficiency standards. ELLs take the assessments that match their grades of enrollment.

Each assessment contains four sections: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The ELPA assessments are not timed. Estimated work times are provided for assessment planning purposes. The first three assessment sections can be administered in small group settings. The fourth section, speaking, is individually administered to students.

Who is Assessed?

All ELLs who are enrolled in grades K-12 at Michigan public schools, including charter schools, are to be assessed with ELPA this spring. Also, all ELLs enrolled in private schools, which are receiving Title III funding, are to be assessed according to agreements with their local districts. This includes all ELLs who are eligible to receive services (bilingual or ESL, etc.), regardless of whether they are currently receiving those services. According to Department of Education figures for 2005-06, there are approximately 67,000 ELLs in the State, who speak over 100 languages in their homes. While 43 percent are enrolled in grades K-3, many ELLs are older, and may enter our schools having little or no formal education in English or in their native language. Since all ELL students will take the ELPA level matched to their grade level of enrollment, test items have been selected to represent a broad range of difficulty, making it more likely that ELLs who are new to the United States are able to find a few assessment items that can be answered with some confidence.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Some English language learners have also been identified as students with disabilities. Where this is the case, the assessment guidelines included in the IEP will determine which accommodations will be provided for ELPA. A draft listing of standard and nonstandard accommodations for ELPA is attached in an updated Assessment Accommodation Summary Table. (Please note: ELPA assessment accommodations will include enlarged print for all levels. A condensed form of Braille will be provided for grades 3-12.)

ELPA Assessment Training

Specialized training sessions will be conducted for educators and school staff involved with the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). The initial training on January 30 is targeted for educational leaders who will be coordinating implementation of ELPA in their schools and districts. This training will emphasize planning aspects of ELPA. A flyer announcing this training session is attached.

Training to actually administer the ELPA, including the individually administered speaking section, will also be provided by teleconference at Wayne RESA on the afternoon of March 2. This session will assist school staff in all aspects of giving the assessment to students, including the preparation of materials, strategies for guiding students to follow taped instruction, and accurate scoring of individually administered speaking section.

DVDs, and video stream versions of the trainings will be available to educators who are either unable to attend or are not located in close proximity to a satellite site. In addition to the trainings above, on-site regional trainings will be provided as requested.

Collecting ELPA Coordinator & Enrollment Information

As many of you may be aware, screens to collect enrollment information for this spring's ELPA are now available through the OEAA Secure Site. The enrollment information will guide the numbers of ELPA materials that are printed and provided to your schools and districts. There is a collection date of January 25 listed on the site; however, we will continue to collect the ELPA Coordinator contact and enrollment information until February 3, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. Do this by accessing the OEAA secure site, then click on the Additional Orders & Shipment Tracking button on the left side. Click the profile tab to update coordinator information.

Pre-Identification of ELPA Students

The pre-identification process for ELPA will utilize the OEAA Secure Site. When signing onto the site, the test cycle Spring 2006 ELPA K-12 can be accessed to provide pre-identification information and demographics for ELPA students. Electronic files from local districts can be loaded by District Coordinators to populate this pre-identification database. Also, new students may be added after the initial load, and schools may create on-site labels for new students during ELPA administration. The ending date for loading the pre-id files has been set for February 15 at 5:00 p.m., in order to ensure that materials for your schools and districts can be printed and shipped to you by the March 13-15 timeline.

ELPA Materials

At the K-2 level, English language learners will mark answers to questions directly in a scannable assessment booklet. All sections of the assessment are contained in one document. There are four sections: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. Speaking is individually scored for students and answers are recorded in the scannable assessment booklet at the time of assessment. For grades 3-12, assessment materials include assessment booklets and a scannable answer document.

Audiotapes and CDs will be available and highly recommended for use with certain sections of the assessment, including listening. This is intended to standardize the stimulus and assist students in understanding the stimulus presented. Enlarged print will also be provided and Braille for grades 3-12.

(If you have a K-2 student that uses Braille, please contact OEAA for additional information.)

Two types of manuals will be provided to districts, both an ELPA Coordinator Manual that will assist districts and schools with planning for ELPA, and a separate manual containing directions for the actual ELPA test items. The Directions for Administration will be used to actually administer the assessment. Many of the processes used for this assessment will be very similar to MEAP. The OEAA secure site will be used by District Coordinators for the pre-identification of English language learners. Onsite labels may be used for new students entering during the time of assessment. A teleconference that focuses on the coordination and planning for the assessment has been scheduled at Wayne RESA on the afternoon of January 30 (see ELPA training section). Additional regional meetings will be held as requested.

ELPA Reports

For this first year, two sets of results will be provided to schools and districts. The first set will provide raw score information approximately 28 days after materials are received for scoring. This score information will be used by a standard setting panel, which will be convened to develop cut-score recommendations for each grade level. The standard setting activity will result in three performance levels for each grade level assessed. Standard-setting recommendations will then be provided to the State Board of Education for final approval. Electronic and paper-based copies of final reports will then be distributed to schools and districts.

In future years, all results will be provided at the same time, as a final report, approximately 28 days after a district's scannable materials are received for scoring, allowing for all ELPA results to be posted prior to the end of the school year.

cc: LEA and ISD Superintendents, Public School Academy Directors and Authorizers